

10 Healthy Tips to Reduce Your Sleep Quota

Sadhguru offers tips for those looking to reduce their sleep quota, and delves into the relationship between sleep, food, and restfulness.

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#1 Don't Battle With Life

Sadhguru: The body needs rest, not sleep. In most people's experience, sleep is the deepest form of restfulness they know, so they talk about sleep. But essentially, the body is not asking for sleep, it is looking for restfulness. Your mornings would be pretty bad if your nights were not restful. So it is not sleep but restfulness that makes the difference.

If you keep your body relaxed throughout the day, if your work, exercise and every other activity is a form of relaxation for you, your sleep quota will go down naturally. The problem is that people have

been taught to do everything hard – in tension. I see people walking very tense in the park. This sort of exercise will bring more harm than wellbeing. Don't go at everything like it is a war. Whether you are walking, jogging or exercising, why don't you do it easily, joyfully?

Don't battle with life. [Keeping yourself fit](#) and well is not a battle. Play a game, swim, walk, whatever you like. You will only have a problem if all you want to do is eat cheesecake! Otherwise there is no problem about being relaxed with any activity.

#2 Yogic Practices – Shambhavi Mahamudra

If you bring certain yogic practices such as the Shambhavi Mahamudra into your life, one of the first changes you will see is in your pulse rate. For example, someone who has just gone through the [Inner Engineering program](#) and started Shambhavi, if he checks his pulse before and after dinner and records it, and then practices Shambhavi twice a day for six weeks and checks his pulse again, it would have come down by eight to fifteen counts. If one really sinks deep into restfulness in Shambhavi, the pulse rate will go down further.

With 12 to 18 months of practice, you can bring your pulse rate down to around fifty or sixty in a restful state. If this happens, your sleep quota will go down dramatically because the body is generally restful through the day. Whatever activity you may be doing, it remains restful, so it will not demand more sleep.

#3 Yogic Practices – Shoonya Meditation

There is a certain meditation we teach which is called [Shoonya](#). This is taught in a program that we conduct only in the Isha centers in southern India and the United States. We do not teach it elsewhere because it needs a certain atmosphere, training and other processes. Shoonya can bring your sleep quota down dramatically. It is just a fifteen-minute meditation but you will see, if you settle down into this meditation process properly, your metabolism will drop up to twenty-four percent. Twenty-four percent is the deepest drop you can have in conscious states of meditation. If you go beyond that, you will not be conscious in the usual sense. To be able to be relaxed to a point and then to come out consciously, you cannot go beyond twenty-four percent.

You will find this fifteen minutes of meditation is equal to two to three hours of sleep in terms of restfulness. Because there are such drastic physiological changes in the body, especially on the level of your blood chemistry, phenomenal things will change – which is why it needs to be taught in very controlled, focused conditions.

#4 Bring Natural Foods in Your Diet

If you are sleeping eight or nine hours a day, one thing to look at is the food you eat. Consuming at least a certain amount of [vegetarian material](#), particularly foods that can be eaten in their natural, uncooked condition is very important for your general wellbeing. When you cook food, a large volume of prana or life energy is destroyed. This is one reason why lethargy can set into the body. If you eat a certain amount of fresh fruits and vegetables, there are many benefits, but one thing you will notice immediately is that your sleep quota will come down.

#5 From Stove to Plate – Make it Quick

In [Indian culture](#), traditionally it is said that any cooked food should always be eaten within 1.5 to 2 hours of being cooked. Keeping cooked food in a fridge for long periods of time and then eating it can raise your sleep quota in addition to causing many other problems to the body. The same is true for canned food. There is something called “tamas” which literally means “inertia.” Food that is kept like this will have a lot of tamas, which can bring down your mental agility and alertness.

#6 How Much to Eat

How keenly you manage your energies is what decides your alertness. To meditate, alertness should be not just of the mind but of your very energy. To assist this, for people on the yogic path, it is said that you should eat only twenty-four mouthfuls, and you must chew every mouthful at least twenty-four times. This will ensure that food is pre-digested in your mouth before it goes in, and it will not cause dullness.

If you do this during your evening meal, you will easily wake up at three-thirty in the morning. In the yogic system, this period is called the Brahma Muhurtam. It is an ideal time to do yogic practices because there is an extra support from nature at that [time for your sadhana](#).

#7 Don't Forcefully Deny Sleep

How much sleep your body needs depends on the level of physical activity you perform. There is no need to fix the quantum of either food or sleep. When your activity levels are low, you eat less. When they are high, you may eat more. The same goes for sleep. The moment the body is well rested it will get up, whether at 3 AM or 8 AM. Your body should not wake up to an alarm bell. Once it feels sufficiently rested, it must come awake.

If you forcefully deny sleep to the body, your physical and mental capabilities and whatever else you have will drop. You should never do that. You must give the body how much sleep it needs.

But if the body is somehow trying to use the bed as a grave, it won't want to come out. Somebody will have to raise you from the dead! It depends on how you are handling your life. If you are in a mental state where you want to avoid life, you will naturally tend to eat and sleep more.

#8 Don't Sleep Right After You Eat

There are quite a few people who are in such a mental state that unless they load themselves with food and make the body dull, they cannot fall asleep. You must give sufficient time for digestion to happen before you sleep. I would say 80% of the food that you eat will go waste if you fall asleep within two hours of eating. If you are in a condition where you cannot sleep unless you have a full stomach, you need to address this issue. This is not about sleep, this is a certain mental state.

#9 The Right Position For Sleep

When the body is positioned horizontally, you can immediately make out that your pulse rate drops. The body makes this adjustment because if blood is pumped with the same force, too much will go into your head, causing damage. The blood vessels which go upward are a finer arrangement compared to those going down. As they go up into the brain, they become almost hair-like, to a point that they cannot take an extra drop.

When you sleep, if you place your head towards the north and stay that way for 5 to 6 hours, the magnetic pull of the Earth will cause pressure on your brain because iron is an important ingredient in your blood. It is not that if you sleep this way you will fall dead. But if you do this every day, you are asking for trouble. If you are beyond a certain age and your blood vessels are weak, it can result in hemorrhages and paralytic strokes. If your system is sturdy, you may not sleep very well because there is more circulation in the brain than there should be.

If you are in the northern hemisphere, East is the best direction to keep your head when you sleep. Northeast is okay. West is alright. South, if you must. North, no. In the southern hemisphere, don't put your head to the south.

#10 Keep Your System Pure

The nature of a human being is such that while every other creature adapts to the situations it is placed in, a human being is able to create the situations that he wants. That is what makes us distinct. If you have any sort of concern for yourself, you have to be conscious about what goes into your system.

The question is not of how long you live but how well you live. What you hear, what you say, [how you eat](#) – these things are practiced in yoga because by keeping the ambience, our tongue, our mind and body pure, there is a certain freedom, intelligence and blissfulness to your existence.

Let me tell you a joke. Two Presbyterian nuns were driving in the Montana countryside and they ran out of gas. So they walked to a nearby farm which was five miles away. They found the local farmer – he was sloshed out – and they asked him, “We need some gasoline.” He said, “Take it from my tractor.” So they went to the tractor, but they did not have a can. Then they saw an old chamber pot. So they emptied gasoline from the tractor into the chamber pot and carried it to the car, five miles back. They were slowly pouring it into the car. A Baptist priest was passing by. He saw these nuns pouring things from the chamber pot into the gas tank, and he stopped, backed up and said, “Sisters, I really appreciate your faith, but believe me, it doesn’t work like that.”

If you just pick up some things here and there and put it into your system, it won’t go very far.

***Editor’s Note:** “[Food Body](#)” looks at the kind of foods the body is most comfortable with and explores the most appropriate ways of consuming such foods. The 33-page booklet is a first step to tune into your body and figure out what suits it best. The book is available on a “name your price” basis. [Pay as you wish or click “Claim for Free”](#).*

We can call ourselves human only when we rise beyond our personal issues and our issues of community, caste, creed, gender, and nationality.

– [SadhguruToday’s Mystic Quote](#)

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